

MANY DIVERSIFIED INTERESTS, INC., SUPERFUND SITE

Houston, Harris County, Texas

SITE STATUS SUMMARY

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 6)

EPA ID#: TXD008083404

State Congressional District: 18

Site Status Summary Updated: February 4, 2003



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: The Many Diversified Interests, Inc., Superfund Site (hereinafter “MDI” or “the Site”) occupies a 36-acre tract of land located at 3617 Baer Street in Houston, Texas. The abandoned Site (former foundry) is located 2 miles east of downtown Houston and 1 block south of Interstate Highway 10 (see the “Site Aerial Photograph” section of this summary). This part of Houston is referred to as the “Fifth Ward.”

Population: The urban population near the Site is approximately 50,000.

Setting: The MDI property is bounded by Hare Street to the north, National Vinegar Company and Press Street to the east, the former Texas & New Orleans railroad right-of-way beyond the easement to the south, and Bringhurst Street to the west. Residential areas are adjacent to the east, west, and north sides of the Site. Blanche Kelso Bruce Elementary School is located adjacent to the west side of the Site across Bringhurst Street. Industrial areas are adjacent to the south side of the Site.

Structures currently on the Site include concrete foundations from several demolished foundry buildings, a laboratory and administration building, a railroad boxcar used as a former storage building, a large melt transformer in the northwest corner of the site, and several concrete structures formerly used as vats. The foundry buildings were demolished in 1995 under order of a U.S. Bankruptcy Court. Remnants at the Site include numerous piles of demolition debris consisting mainly of brick, wood, refractory brick, and miscellaneous debris. Other current significant Site features include two ponds, two former drum storage areas, a pattern vault, and a landfill.

PRESENT STATUS AND ISSUES

- ! The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently performing a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) at the Site. The purpose of the RI/FS is to determine the nature and extent of contamination and to gather sufficient information about the Site to support an informed risk management decision regarding which remedy is the most appropriate for the Site. The EPA expects to begin sampling activities at the Site in February 2003.

WASTES AND VOLUMES

- ! The constituents of “potential” concern (COPC) that will be investigated during the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility (RI/FS) include metals, such as lead, volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds, polychlorinated biphenyls, and asbestos. Other COPCs will be identified during the “scoping” of the RI/FS.
- ! The volumes of wastes currently present at the Site have not been determined. This information will be obtained during the RI/FS currently being planned for the Site.

NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST

- ! The National Priorities List (NPL) is a list of national priorities among the known or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States. The NPL is intended primarily to guide the EPA in determining which sites warrant further investigation to assess the nature and extent of public health and environmental risks associated with a release of hazardous substances.
- ! NPL Inclusion Proposal Date: The “Proposed Rule” proposing the Site to the NPL was published in the Federal Register on September 29, 1998.
- ! NPL Inclusion Final Date: The “Final Rule” adding the Site to the NPL was published in the Federal Register on January 15, 1999.

SITE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



- ! Photographs of the Site can be viewed on the internet at:
www.epa.gov/earth1r6/6sf/pdf/mdi_photos_sss_1.pdf

SITE HISTORY

- ! In 1926, the Texas Electric Steel Casting Company (TESCO) began operations as a metal casting foundry. The TESCO foundry initially occupied the former Houston Brick Works facility. The foundry expanded operations north of Baer Street and south of Gillespie during World War II. A second foundry was built on the eastern portion of the site during the latter-half of 1970.
- ! TESCO primarily manufactured specialty molded parts such as large wheels, tracks, and mining equipment. The process area consisted of the two casting plants. Plant I produced large castings, while Plant II produced smaller castings. Both plants maintained separate sand systems, core ovens, mold makers, electric arc furnaces, pouring facilities, and cleaning, annealing, and heat treating process areas.

- ! Various grades of steel, including high carbon, chrome molybdenum, high nickel, and stainless steel were cast at the TESCO facility. Scrap metal and iron were melted in the carbon arc furnaces, tested, corrected for the elements needed for the different grades of steel, and poured into molds. Molds and cores were constructed by mixing sand with flour binders. Some cores were made by mixing iron oxide with an oil-based material, and then hardened in core ovens. Cores and molds were treated with a water-based zircon flour and dye mixture to prevent the molten metal from eroding them.
- ! Castings were cleaned (by mechanical grinding, shot blasting, or sandblasting) and heat-treated. Heat-treating consisted of annealing followed by water or oil quenching. Final machining was performed either on site or at the customer's shop, if needed. Some parts required X-ray inspection or certification.
- ! During the mid-1980s, the southern portion of the site was leased to Can-Am Resource Group (Can-Am). Can-Am conducted a spent catalyst recycling operation using an experimental process. Can-Am reportedly obtained between 2,000 and 4,000 drums of spent catalyst from chemical plants and refineries along the Houston Ship Channel. By 1988, Can-Am ceased operations and the stored drums of spent catalyst were abandoned on the Site.
- ! In 1990, MDI bought the TESCO note from Texas Commerce Bank. TESCO ceased operations in February 1991, and MDI foreclosed on the property. MDI reopened as the San Jacinto Foundry (SJF) on March 1, 1991. SJF continued operations until about June 1, 1992. MDI filed for Chapter 7 Bankruptcy in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Texas (Houston District) on May 20, 1992. The on-site facilities were demolished as a salvage operation under order of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court between March 1995 and January 1996.
- ! The EPA joined efforts with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the South Central Laborers AGC and provided an environmental training program called the Superfund Job Training Initiative (SJTI) for Fifth Ward community residents. The SJTI, in partnership with stakeholders; state/local governments; and community leaders, such as Make Ready, Search, and Houston Works; provided training to nearly 27 citizens living in the community impacted by the Site. The focus of the training was basic construction, lead abatement, asbestos abatement, and hazardous materials. This training was completed on April 1, 1999. The names of these SJTI graduates were sent to various hazardous waste/Superfund/Brownfields environmental contractors within the Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and New Mexico areas (areas served by the EPA's Region 6 office). This was done to let these contractors know about the availability of these trained and certified people in the Houston area.

- ! In 1998 and 1999, the Potentially Responsible Parties performed an extensive drum removal action, with the EPA's oversight. The TNRCC conducted a removal and restoration of 89 residential yards to the west of the Site. The removal action was conducted to remove surface soil with concentrations of lead that equaled or exceeded 500 milligrams/kilogram to reduce the exposure of adults and children to lead.
- ! In September 1999, the Mayor's Office of Environmental Policy (City of Houston) received a Superfund Redevelopment Initiative (SRI) Grant. The City of Houston was selected to receive one of 10 pilot grants being awarded nationwide under the EPA's innovative SRI. The City received \$100,000 to conduct a reuse assessment and public outreach to help determine how best to redevelop the former MDI property in the Fifth Ward. A "Reuse Assessment Report" is currently being developed and is near completion.
- ! The EPA has identified the community surrounding the Site as an "Environmental Justice Community."

ENFORCEMENT

- ! The Superfund Enforcement Program seeks to maximize the involvement of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) in the cleanup of Superfund sites. Statutes provide the EPA with the authority to order PRPs to investigate and clean up sites, negotiate settlements with PRPs to fund and/or perform site cleanups, and commence legal action if the PRPs do not perform and/or pay for cleanup. A primary goal of the enforcement program is to obtain consensual settlement or, if necessary, compel PRPs to implement site cleanups. The primary tool used to achieve this goal is the Administrative Order on Consent (AOC). When EPA takes response or enforcement action at a site, the enforcement program's goal is to recover the costs of those actions from the PRPs. Once a PRP(s) has agreed to take response action at a site, the goal of the enforcement program is to ensure that the studies or cleanup activities are performed correctly and in accordance with the AOC and relevant EPA guidance.
- ! The EPA issued 104(e) Information Request Letters to various past/current owners, operators, and/or generators associated with the Site to learn more about the Site.
- ! The EPA issued General Notice Letters to various past/current owners, operators, and/or generators informing them that the EPA has sufficient information linking them to the Site, considers them to be PRPs for the cleanup of the Site, and encouraging them to enter into an Administrative Order on Consent to voluntarily participate in the removal of the more than 5,300 drums of wastes that were abandoned on the Site. No PRPs volunteered to participate in such a removal action.
- ! On May 18, 1999, the EPA issued Unilateral Administrative Orders (UAO) directing the PRPs

to conduct a removal action at the Site. In response to the UAO, the PRPs formed a PRP “group” to address the drummed wastes present at the Site.

- ! On June 8, 1999, the EPA sent the First Amended UAO to 10 additional PRPs associated with the Site. These additional PRPs were added to the UAO in response to information made available to the EPA by other PRPs. This First Amended UAO encouraged the recipients wishing to comply with the UAO to coordinate with the PRP Group in addressing the drum removal action.
- ! On June 23, 1999, in accordance with the UAO, the PRP Group submitted to EPA, for review and approval, a Removal Action Workplan and a Health & Safety Plan for the Removal Action to address the drummed waste abandoned on the Site. The EPA completed its review and the plans were approved. All physical handling of the drummed waste onsite has been completed. The result was the bulk containerizing, sampling/analysis, and transport for off-site disposal of all 5,300 drums and associated debris and visually contaminated soils. Effective November 23, 1999, the removal of all the drums of waste, visually contaminated soils, and associated debris was achieved.

HUMAN HEALTH AND ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENTS _____

- ! Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessments are an integral part of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) currently being planned for the Site.
- ! A Human Health Risk Assessment estimates the current and possible future risks if no action were taken to clean up a site. The EPA’s Superfund risk assessors determine how threatening a hazardous waste site is to human health and the environment. They seek to determine a safe level for each potentially dangerous contaminant present (e.g., a level at which ill health effects are unlikely and the probability of cancer is very small). Living near a Superfund site doesn’t automatically place a person at risk, that depends on the chemicals present and the ways people are exposed to them.
- ! An Ecological Risk Assessment is defined as a process that evaluates the likelihood that adverse ecological effects are occurring or may occur as a result of exposure to one or more stressors. A stressor is any physical, chemical, or biological entity that can induce an adverse ecological response. Adverse responses can range from sublethal chronic effects in individual organisms to a loss of ecosystem function. Only chemical or physical stressors are subject to risk management decisions at Superfund sites.
- ! Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessments will be performed during the RI/FS currently being planned for the Site.

RECORD OF DECISION

- ! The final remedy (cleanup alternative) for a site is published in a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD is the official documentation of how the EPA considered the remedial alternatives and why the EPA selected the final remedy. Before a ROD can be finalized, the EPA must provide a Proposed Plan for public review and comment. This plan summarizes the remedial alternatives presented in the analysis of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) and identifies the preferred alternative, the rationale for that preferred alternative, and documents that support the EPA's decision.
- ! A ROD has not been signed for the Site. A Proposed Plan will be presented to the public during the latter part of the RI/FS currently being planned for the Site. The RI/FS is expected to be completed approximately 1 ½ years from the start date.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- ! "Community involvement" is the name the EPA uses to identify its process for engaging in dialogue and collaboration with communities affected by Superfund sites. The mission of the Superfund Community Involvement Program is to advocate and strengthen early and meaningful community participation during the EPA's remedial activities at a Site. The EPA's community involvement program is founded on the belief that people have a right to know what the EPA is doing in their community and to have a say in it. Its purpose is to give people the opportunity to become involved in the EPA's activities and to help shape the decisions that are made at a site.
- ! Community Involvement Plan: The Community Involvement Plan (CIP) specifies the community involvement activities that the EPA expects to undertake during the remedial activities planned for the Site. The CIP, prepared in November 1999, will be updated based on community interviews and other relevant information about the Site.
- ! Public Meetings: On June 10-13, 2002, the EPA and Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (now the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) met with the community through door-to-door interviews and an "open house" to learn more about the Site.

A public meeting was held on November 19, 2002, at the Blanche Kelso Bruce Elementary School's gymnasium. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the EPA's activities during the planned Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study for the Site.

- ! Fact Sheets: Fact sheets will be prepared as necessary during the planning and implementation of the RI/FS. These fact sheets will be filed at the Site's repository and distributed to people on the mailing list. Anyone who wishes to be placed on the mailing list to receive current information about the Site is encouraged to call 1-800-533-3508. This Site Status Summary can be found on the internet at the following address:

<http://www.epa.gov/earth1r6/6sf/pdffiles/mdi.pdf>

- ! Site Repository: The purpose of the Site Repository is to provide the public a location near their community to review and copy background and current information about the Site. The Site's repository is located at:

Fifth Ward Multi-Purpose Center/Library
4014 Market Street
Houston, TX 77020
Telephone Number: 713-238-2248

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

- ! A Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) is for a local citizens' group to secure the services of a technical advisor to increase citizen understanding of information that will be developed about the Site during the Superfund process. By law, only one grant for up to \$50,000 may be awarded to a citizens' group for this Site. To be eligible for a grant, a group must incorporate. Also, the applicant must meet a 20 percent matching requirement, which may be in cash or donated services. If you have any questions concerning a TAG, please call Ms. Beverly Negri (TAG Coordinator) at (214) 665-8157 or toll-free at 1-800-533-3508.
- ! Availability Notice: Availability Notices for the TAG were published in local newspapers on May 5, 1999, and October 31, 2000.
- ! Letters of Intent: The TAG application process begins when a group of individuals affected by the Site submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the EPA. LOIs to apply for the TAG were received from Phillip J. Smith on April 13, 1999; Sarah Rowles on April 13, 1999; Rita Love on May 11, 1999; and Jane L. Laping on September 12, 2000 (Mothers for Clean Air, Inc.; 3015 Richmond; Suite 270; Houston, Texas 77098).
- ! Final Application Received: A final TAG application was received on May 18, 2001.

- ! Grant Award: The TAG was awarded to the Mothers for Clean Air on September 2, 2001.
- ! Current Status: The TAG recipient has hired Sound Environmental Solutions as the Technical Advisor.

SITE TEAM

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- ! Stacey Bennett (Remedial Project Manager, Environmental Engineer):
Contact for “any” questions about the Site and this Site Status Summary; 214-665-6729*; E-Mail Address, bennett.stacey@epa.gov
- ! Rafael Abrego Casanova (Remedial Project Manager, Environmental Scientist, Bilingual - Spanish/English):
Contact for “any” questions about the Site and this Site Status Summary; 214-665-7437*; E-Mail Address, casanova.rafael@epa.gov
- ! Barbara Nann (Attorney):
Contact for “legal” questions; 214-665-2157*; E-Mail Address, nann.barbara@epa.gov
- ! Ghassan Khoury (Human Health Risk Assessor, Toxicologist):
Contact for “human health risk assessment” questions; 214-665-8515*; E-Mail Address, khoury.ghassan@epa.gov
- ! Donn Walters (Community Involvement Coordinator):
Contact for “community relations” questions; 214-665-6483*; E-Mail Address, walters.donn@epa.gov
- ! Connie Suttice (Enforcement Officer):
Contact for “cost recovery” questions; 214-665-7345*; E-Mail Address, suttice.connie@epa.gov
- ! Arnold Ondarza (Region 6 Ombudsman, Bilingual - Spanish/English):
Contact for “dispute resolution;” 303-312-6777*; E-Mail Address, ondarza.arnold@epa.gov

! Karen Bond (State Coordinator):
Contact for State and EPA “cooperative agreements;” 214-665-6682*; E-Mail
Address, bond.karen@epa.gov

! * EPA (Region 6) Superfund Toll-Free Telephone Number: 1-800-533-3508.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ):

! Alan Etheredge (Project Manager):
512-239-2139**; E-Mail Address, aethered@tceq.state.tx.us

! Janie Montemayor (Community Involvement Coordinator, Bilingual -
Spanish/English)
512-239-3844**; E-Mail Address, jmontema@tceq.state.tx.us

! ** TCEQ Toll-Free Number: 1-800-633-9363.

REALIZED CLEANUP BENEFITS _____

- ! The cleanup of 89 residential properties prevents those children and adults from being exposed to lead. Other specific cleanup benefits will be identified during the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study currently being planned for the Site.
- ! The thirty-six (36) acres within the Site’s fenced boundaries are planned to be returned to productive use.